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Remarks Following a Video Teleconference With Military and Civilian Leaders in Afghanistan

September 26, 2008

President Bush. President, welcome. I'm pleased to be joined by President Karzai and members of his Government, as we've just had a discussion with our fellow citizens represented here on the screen. We had a real-time SVTS with PRT members in Kunar and Nangarhar Provinces in Afghanistan, plus the Governors—the Afghan Governors.

My reaction to our conversation is, one, there was promise and progress. No question, it's difficult. But if you listen to the people who are actually on the ground working with the citizens of Afghanistan on matters such as agriculture or education or infrastructure, you'll understand why I said that there is progress and promise and hope.

And so I want to thank my fellow citizens, Mr. President, in your presence, for their sacrifice and service. Three of the PRT members are here—Provincial Reconstruction Teams. This is a central part of a counterinsurgency strategy, which combines economic development, education, infrastructure with security, all aiming to help this young democracy not only survive but to thrive, so that it never becomes a safe haven for those would do us harm again.

I've had a grand experience in dealing with President Karzai. He and I have known each other for a long time.

President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Exactly.

President Bush. We—I can remember when I was informed that our special forces rescued President Karzai during the liberation of Afghanistan. He was stuck out there wondering whether he was going to make it—

President Karzai. Top of the mountain.

President Bush. We sent some good troops in and pulled him out. And he has served his country then, and he's served his country now as the President. And I admire your leadership and your determination to

succeed. And I want to welcome you here. I want to let you know that the United States is committed to the people of Afghanistan. We will stand by your side and do the hard work necessary to achieve our objective. And our objective is for you to become a thriving democracy and to deny Al Qaida and other extremists a safe haven or a base from which to launch their murderous attacks.

Welcome.

President Karzai. Thank you, President. Mr. President, thank you very much for seeing me and my delegation once again—so graciously, and with tremendous hospitality, as always, in the White House.

Mr. President, my trip this time to Washington, as I insisted to be here with you, is for one reason alone, and that is to thank you and, through you, the American people for all that you have done for Afghanistan. You can't imagine here in Washington, especially at the White House, how much difference you have made to the lives of the Afghan people by your personal commitment to Afghanistan, by your commitment for the betterment of Afghan life, for the security of the Afghan people, the democracy of the Afghan people, for education and health and all that we discussed earlier with the PRTs and the Afghan Governors.

At times in this, the span of 7 years, we have come across issues that gives us a feeling as if things were slowing down. That is not the impression that we have in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has made progress that we would have not been able to make in 50 years or 60 years—what you have done in the past 6 or 7 years. We have rebuilt in 4 years more than 3,500 of our roads. We have millions of children. We have more than 85,000 of our babies, infants, and children now saved each year. Infant mortality is down; health care from 9 percent to 85 percent. National reserves, I will share that for you now, from \$180 million of 2002 to \$3.5 billion today—over \$3 billion today.

Life is better. Of course we have challenges, and the challenges will continue to face us as we move ahead. The success is already there; the success will be completed. You will be leaving office, Mr. President, together with the Vice President, in a few months from today, but I would like you to

remember as you leave office that Afghanistan will remember you tremendously, nicely, with affection. And you are there in our memory in a golden plate. Come and visit us so we can show it to you in a manner that we do traditionally in Afghanistan.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

President Karzai. It's an honor to have associated with you, to have had your friendship and to have had your support and to have had your patience with me and some of our habits up there. [Laughter]. Very, very nice of you. I have yelled at times; I've been angry at times, but you've always been smiling and generous, and that's so nice of you.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

President Karzai. Thank you very much.

President Bush. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Proclamation 8294—To Implement Amendments to the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003
September 26, 2008

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Section 3A(b)(1) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (Public Law 108–61) (the “Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act”), as amended by section 6(a) of the Tom Lantos Block Burmese JADE (Junta’s Anti-Democratic Efforts) Act of 2008 (Public Law 110–286) (the “JADE Act”), directs the President to prohibit the importation of jadeite and rubies mined or extracted from Burma, as well as the importation of articles of jewelry containing jadeite and rubies mined or extracted from Burma (Burmese covered articles), until such time as the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that Burma has met the conditions described in section 3(a)(3) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act.

2. Sections 3A(c)(1) and 3A(c)(2) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, as amended, set forth certain conditions for the importation of jadeite and rubies mined or

extracted from countries other than Burma, as well as for the importation of articles of jewelry containing jadeite and rubies mined or extracted from countries other than Burma (non-Burmese covered articles).

3. Section 3A(c)(2) of the Act, as amended, also permits the President to waive the conditions for importation set forth in section 3A(c)(1) of non-Burmese covered articles from any country with respect to which the President determines and certifies to the appropriate congressional committees that the country has implemented certain measures to prevent the trade in Burmese covered articles.

4. In order to implement the prohibitions on the importation of Burmese covered articles and the conditions for importation of non-Burmese covered articles set forth in sections 3A(b)(1), 3A(c)(1), and 3A(c)(2) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, as amended, it is necessary to modify the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) to include an additional U.S. Note to chapter 71.

5. Section 604 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (the “1974 Act”) (19 U.S.C. 2483), authorizes the President to embody in the HTS the substance of relevant provisions of that Act, or other acts affecting import treatment, and of actions taken thereunder, including the removal, modification, continuance, or imposition of any rate of duty or other import restriction.

6. Sections 3A(b)(2) and 3A(c)(3) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, as amended, authorize the President to issue such proclamations, regulations, licenses, and orders, and conduct such investigations, as may be necessary to implement the prohibition on Burmese covered articles set forth in section 3A(b)(1) of that Act and the conditions for importation of non-Burmese covered articles set forth in sections 3A(c)(1) and 3A(c)(2) of that Act.

7. I have determined that it is appropriate to authorize the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Homeland Security, pursuant to sections 3A(b)(2) and 3A(c)(3) of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, as amended, to issue regulations, licenses, and orders, and conduct such investigations as may be necessary, to implement